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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TURNER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 15, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL R. TURNER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 2011

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, the greatest threat to our democracy is unemployment. We all know the numbers. We all have far too many constituents who don't have jobs and can't provide for their families.

Too many Americans are without work, and more and more of them are losing hope. Unemployment benefits are running out. Fear is creeping in. But for some of the unemployed, their tireless job search has been coming up

empty because some employers won't even consider them for openings.

Recently, The New York Times reported that one employer listed a job that included the caveat: "No unemployed candidate will be considered at all," and a Texas electronics company said that it won't "consider/review anyone not currently employed, regardless of the reason." It is reminiscent of a time when signs read: Blacks need not apply, or Women need not apply.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's high time that we fix that. How are the unemployed supposed to find work if they don't even get considered for a job? How do we expect the unemployment rate to go down when the unemployed aren't even available or allowed to compete for a job?

Along with Congressman JOHN LEWIS, I'm introducing legislation that will amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to make it illegal for employers to discriminate against applicants because they are currently or were currently unemployed.

The Civil Rights Act of 2011 will not give a job to those who are unemployed, but it will give those who are unemployed through no fault of their own the opportunity to compete for a job on the merits of their ability.

Mr. Speaker, we talk in pleasantries and political correctness about "these difficult economic times." We debate policy and hold hearings on how to move America forward, but recently the Bureau of Labor Statistics had to modify its current population survey to be able to include responses reporting a duration of unemployment over 2 years.

We are making room for the reality of chronic unemployment in America in very real ways, while promising it will get better. I think we need to do more to make sure that people have opportunities.

Nearly 9 percent of Americans right now are unemployed. That's 13.9 mil-

lion Americans that we represent as Members of Congress who are looking for the opportunity to pursue the American Dream. They are looking for Washington and to Washington for leadership and to keep things from getting any worse.

They are writing our offices begging us to help them jump-start America. They are not just looking for a hand out. They are looking for a way out, just a chance so that they can take care of the rest. They are hoping that the next interview will mean a new start.

Mr. Speaker, the job market is troublesome; but we cannot allow companies to arbitrarily pick who will come out of the economic crisis by disqualifying unemployed workers. It should not be their right to discriminate this way.

We, as a Nation, face triumphs and challenges together. It seems to me that to allow such a practice is counterintuitive to everything that Congress is working towards. Why create jobs if those Americans currently without jobs are not eligible?

Just because an individual was unlucky to be laid off or had the misfortune to graduate into a jobless market does not mean that we should just cast them aside.

This employment practice adds insult to injury for Americans who are desperately looking for jobs, for college graduates who debate if their education was worth the cost, for families who are trying to make more on less.

Those who live on Main Street of America had very little to do with the onset of our economic crisis. In response, they are doing what generations before us have taught, carrying on, hoping that the darkness will give way to light.

Mr. Speaker, if we allow employers to block consideration for those who are unemployed, we let that light get a little dimmer. We allow the American

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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Dream to be tarnished. We send a message to the American people, those who are currently unemployed and those who are one bad break away from unemployment, that we will bail out banks but not support them as they fight to take care of their families.

The Civil Rights Act and the amendments that have followed demonstrate what makes America exceptional. Here, regardless of the color of your skin, the god you pray to, your ethnicity, your age or sex, you will be judged on your performance. We haven't always lived up to our principles, but it is the collective momentum towards these values that makes America great.

Discrimination against any American is an affront to the very idea of America. A new class of citizen now needs protection from the superficial bias that is not based on the ability to perform. Using current employment status as a requirement for application or consideration is shameful.

There are 13.9 million Americans currently unemployed; that means 13.9 million Americans are considered by some employers to be no longer viable for employment. They are dismissed out of hand.

But, Mr. Speaker, I refuse to believe that every unemployed individual is unqualified for a job. It is an arbitrary way of narrowing an applicant pool by finding a loophole that allows discrimination.

I ask each and every Member of Congress to stand with me and to say to those 13.9 million Americans who are unemployed, you are not forgotten, your chance has not passed. We should pass the Civil Rights Act of 2011. We should not allow the opportunities that all Americans deserve to be taken away. Current joblessness should not disqualify you from employment. Your ability is more valuable than any label ever placed upon you.

CUBAN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and support the efforts under way throughout my wonderful State of Florida to honor the courage, the achievement, and the legacy of Cuban Americans in the United States.

The following cities, in addition to the Florida House of Representatives, have passed resolutions in support of designating a day to recognize the many valuable contributions of Cuban Americans to the United States. Hialeah Gardens, Hialeah, Doral, Florida City, West Miami, Miami Beach, the City of Miami, Pembroke Pines, Homestead and Key West.

Cuban Americans have had a profound and lasting influence on the history, values, and culture of the United

States since the arrival of the earliest Cuban settlers more than 400 years ago in St. Augustine, Florida.

According to the 2007 census survey, 251,000 Cuban American-owned businesses generated \$51 billion to our economy. Several local south Florida municipalities have recognized the important contributions that the Cuban American community has made to the economic and cultural development of our great Nation.

Cuban Americans have become dedicated public servants, having held posts at the highest levels of government.

Cubans settling in the United States look at this Nation, our wonderful United States of America, with gratitude; and many have risked life and limb to defend this bastion of freedom and democracy. Countless Cuban Americans have served bravely in all branches of the United States Armed Forces and have fought honorably in many wars.

One such hero is Armando Alejandro, who voluntarily enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served two tours of duty in Vietnam. Armando was also a volunteer for the Brothers to the Rescue, a pro-democracy organization whose mission is to promote and support the efforts of the people of Cuba to free themselves from the Cuban dictatorship through the use of active non-violence.

While he and his fellow Brothers to the Rescue volunteers were carrying out such a humanitarian mission on February 24, 1996, the Cuban regime ordered Cuban military jets to shoot down their unarmed civilian aircraft.

□ 1010

The shoot-down resulted in the unjust killings of Carlos Costa, Armando Alejandro, Mario de la Pena, and Pablo Morales.

Last month, I wrote a letter to Secretary Clinton and Attorney General Holder asking the administration to take immediate action to indict Fidel and Raul Castro for their role in this horrible shoot-down. The United States must make it clear that we will not stand for the Cuban tyrannies, manipulation, and unapologetic crimes against the American people nor for its abuses against its own people of Cuba.

No matter how the regime and its enablers try to spin it, the Cuban tyranny remains as oppressive and uncompromising as ever. Its methodical release and exile of political prisoners is nothing but an attempt to curry favor with those with whom the regime seeks business.

This weekend's conviction and sentencing of U.S. citizen Alan Gross to 15 years in prison is a clear reminder of this. This deplorable act is another illustration of the regime's willingness to use human beings as political pawns to advance its destructive agenda. The United States and all responsible nations must demand the immediate release of Alan Gross and all prisoners

who remain wrongfully imprisoned in Castro's gulags.

I am proud to say that despite the challenges and the passing years, Cuban Americans remain undeterred in our fight for freedom, justice, and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I join in the support of these resolutions and again urge that a date be set to honor the courage, the achievements, and the legacy of Cuban Americans in the glorious United States.

THE COST OF THE ENERGY TAX PREVENTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, Colstrip, Montana, is home to the second largest coal plant west of the Mississippi. One boxcar-full of coal is burned every 5 minutes.

The burning coal creates sodium, thallium, mercury, boron, aluminum, and arsenic, which is pumped out of the factory and into the air. The chemicals that are pumped into the air are caught in the factory's scrubbers and then dumped with coal ash into giant settling ponds. These ponds are shallow artificial lakes of concentrated toxicity which leach this poison into wells and aquifers.

The sludge flows into the surrounding towns and countryside, bubbling up against foundations and floorings, cracking the floor in Colstrip's local grocery store. Ranchers in eastern Montana are now suing the plant for damages; noxious water, they cite, is the only liquid that fill their wells and stock ponds.

James Jansen, a renowned climate scientist, says Colstrip itself will cause the extinction of 400 species. But Colstrip burns on. Why? Because we have no national energy plan, and because there are currently no Federal enforceable regulations specific to coal ash.

This lack of federally enforceable safeguards is exactly what led to the disaster in Tennessee, where a dam holding more than 1 billion gallons of toxic coal ash failed. The TVA disaster destroyed 300 acres, dozens of homes, killed fish and other wildlife, and poisoned the Emory and Clinch Rivers.

From Tennessee to Montana and across the Nation, the story is the same: We have no national conservation plan, no national energy policy, no regulatory enforcement authority.

What is worse, today we are faced with a bill, H.R. 910, the Energy Tax Prevention Act, which purports to protect citizens from taxation. In reality, this bill is a death sentence not only to our land, air, water, animals, and plants but to humans.

This bill overturns proven scientific findings that carbon pollution endangers the health of Americans. It repeals the greenhouse gas reporting rule and removes the Environmental Protection